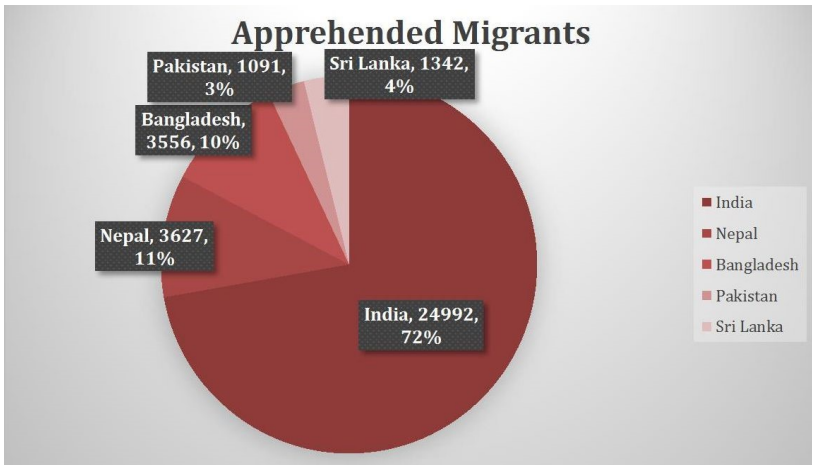
saalt Strengthening South Asian Communities in America

SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANTS IN DETENTION

This fact sheet provides an overview of trends in South Asian migration along the U.S. Southern border, conditions many South Asian migrants face in detention facilities, specific detention cases SAALT has tracked since 2014, and numbers of undocumented Indians.

How many South Asians are apprehended at U.S. borders?

- Over **34,000 South Asian migrants have been apprehended along U.S. borders since 2008**.



- The **numbers have risen sharply in the last decade**. In 2008, 77 Indians were apprehended along the border. In 2018, **nearly 9,000 Indian migrants** were apprehended along the border.

- The **number of migrants from India who were apprehended at the Southern border tripled** from 2,943 in fiscal year 2017 to 8,997 in fiscal year 2018.

- The **number of migrants from Bangladesh apprehended along the Southern border doubled** from 564 in 2017 to 1,198 in 2018.[1]

- Between October 2014 – April 2018, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) arrested over 17,000 South Asians (12,670 Indians; 1,752 Bangladeshis; 1,744 Nepalis; 659 Pakistanis; 292 Sri Lankans; 2 Bhutanese).[2]

[1] https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/assets/documents/2019-Mar/BP%20Apps%20by%20Sector%20and%20Citizenship%20FY07-FY18.pdf
[2] https://trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/cbparrest/

- As of 2017, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has detained at least 3,013 South Asians (2,376 Indians; 257 Bangladeshis; 211 Nepalis; 160 Pakistanis; 92 Sri Lankans; 9 Bhutanese).[3]

How many South Asians are undocumented?

- As of 2017, we know that **there are at least 630,000 undocumented Indians alone** in the United States, marking a 72% increase in undocumented Indians since 2010. Much of the increase can be attributed to visa overstays with nearly 250,000 Indians overstaying their visas in 2016.[4]

How are South Asians being treated in detention?

SAALT and our partners have tracked a pattern of abuse toward detained South Asians, which has driven many of them to go on hunger strikes to raise awareness of their conditions. Patterns of abuse documented in detention facilities across the U.S. since 2015 include:

- Inadequate or non-existent language access
- Denial of religious accommodations
- Use of solitary confinement as a form of retaliation
- Gross medical neglect
- High Bond amounts: Indian migrants have the highest required median bond amounts—$17,000 in FY 2018 and $20,000 in FY 2019. Similarly, detained migrants from Nepal, China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh typically also had high required bond amounts.[5]

Documented Cases of South Asians in Detention

SAALT and our partners have documented multiple instances of South Asians detained and deported by ICE and CBP since 2014.

- July 2019: Three Indian nationals are on hunger strike in the Otero County Processing Center and four Indian nationals are on hunger strike in the El Paso Processing Center. They are being subject to forced hydration through court order and are being threatened with force feeding.[6]
- June 2016: 6 year old Gurupreet Kaur's body was found in the Arizona desert. She had crossed the Southern border with her mother and 5 other Indian nationals.[7]

[3] trac.syr.edu/phptools/immigration/detention
[4] https://cmsny.org/publications/essay-2017-undocumented-and-overstays/
[5] https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/545/
[6] https://www.apnews.com/b386012b33a14d4695827a2265ea36f3
[7] https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/24/us/border-indian-girl-death/index.html

- April 2019: At least two Bangladeshi minors were being held at the Otay Mesa Detention Center, an adult detention facility in San Diego, CA. ICE denied their status as minors and they were eventually deported.[8]
- January 2019: 30 Punjabi and Cuban asylum seekers were detained in El Paso Processing Center and began a hunger strike. Nine of the Punjabi asylum seekers were force fed and placed in solitary confinement. Seven of these nine asylum seekers were deported back to India and two were released and have pending asylum cases.[9]
- June 2018: Nearly 400 South Asian asylum seekers were detained at the Federal Correctional Institution in Victorville, CA.[10]
- June 2018: Over 100 South Asian asylum seekers at the ICE Processing Center in Folkston, Georgia went on a second hunger strike.[11]
- June 2018: 70 detained South Asian migrants were denied access to counsel, language interpretation, and religious accommodations in the Yamhill County Federal Prison in Sheridan, OR.[12]
- 2015: 54 South Asian asylum seekers, mainly from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Pakistan went on hunger strike at the El Paso Processing Center.[13]
- 2014: 37 Punjabi asylum seekers were detained in the El Paso Processing Center and went on hunger strike.[14]

Other cases of detained South Asian migrants: *Adelanto ICE Processing Center, Rio Grande Valley sector, Tucson sector, San Diego sector, Laredo sector, El Centro sector, Yuma sector, El Paso sector, Del Rio sector, Miami sector, Detroit sector, New Orleans sector, Swanton sector, Grand Folks sector, Blaine sector, Spokane sector, Havre sector.*

[8]https://www.voiceofsandiego.org/topics/government/two-migrants-held-for-months-say-ice-is-ignoring-evidence-they-theyre-minors/
[9] https://www.apnews.com/c4b201dac8bf48eba17485a5c357b810
[10]https://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/hundreds-of-sikh-asylum-seekers-housed-in-victorville-federal-prison/article_cfb6f080-9425-11e8-811b-5b3bfd2ed928.html
[11]https://www.indiawest.com/news/global_indian/sikh-asylum-seekers-allegedly-tortured-at-ice-detention-facility-in/article_145481a0-a4b9-11e8-a908-5b1c954114d4.html
[12] https://www.opb.org/news/article/lawsuit-religious-freedoms-denied-ice-sheridan-oregon-prison/
[13]https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/south-asian-detainees-seeking-asylum-hold-hunger-strike-n448681
[14]http://theaerogram.com/forty-punjabi-men-detained-homeland-security-el-paso-texas-since-last-summer-hunger-strike-nobody-seems-noticed/